



**Tuesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

**Wisconsin State Capitol - Lieutenant Governor's Office**

**10:30 – 11:00 a.m.**

Kristy Worthen, mental health advocate and artist, will present the Shedding Light flag to Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton. Kristy, who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1999, designed and painted the flag to increase awareness of mental health issues. She and her mother now tour the nation to raise the flag at each state capitol.

Join the Worthens and hear their story of hope and help for people who have been diagnosed with a mental illness.

**Please join us for this important event and show Wisconsin's commitment to recovery.**

# Shedding Light Tour

## Overview of the Mental Health Flag Tour

In April of 2002 Pauline Charton, Executive Director of NAMI Arkansas asked Kristy Worthen if she would make some posters or other artwork to use in the "May Is Mental Health Month Program" held at the Arkansas State Capitol on May 2, 2002. Kristy decided to make a Mental Health Flag that could be displayed at the program. Kristy designed and hand painted a white lighthouse trimmed in red, sitting on an island, with a beam of yellow light shining out over the ocean and the inscription on the blue background reads: Shedding Light On Mental Health Issues.

The flag is five foot by nine foot of nylon flag material that was purchased from Flag & Banner in Little Rock. After Kristy finished painting the flag and everyone saw how beautiful the flag was and Kristy explained what it symbolized to her, they thought it should fly above the Arkansas State Capitol instead of just being displayed during the ceremony.

Kristy said the island represented her life for seven years before her diagnosis, she felt empty, scared and all alone, washed ashore in a sea of mixed feelings from highly elated to deeply depressed and felt there was no where to turn for help. The lighthouse represented her diagnosis and the assurance that with the new lines of medication that are available today she could get better. She now knew there was hope and there was help and she could see "the light at the end of the tunnel." The yellow beam of light is her advocacy work letting others know there is hope and help; the ocean represents the people who are still out there with no diagnosis; and the white caps on the waves represent those who have committed suicide due to their mental illness.

When Rockefeller, Lt. Governor of Arkansas, heard her story, he was so impressed with the meaning the flag symbolized that he took it to the National Lieutenant Governors Association meeting and asked them to fly the Mental Health Flag one day at each state capitol to focus attention on mental health issues, help erase stigma and dispel the myths that surround mental illness. The NLGA adopted it as their project to assure that Kristy would have access to each state capitol to fly her flag. Kristy, a survivor of a suicide attempt, feels that suicide is too high a price to pay for an illness that no one understands so she was determined to take her flag to all states to Shed Light on Mental Health Issues.

To date, the flag has flown in 30 states and Washington, DC, and has been signed by President George W. Bush.

- |                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| ♦ Alabama       | ♦ Minnesota        |
| ♦ Arkansas      | ♦ Mississippi      |
| ♦ California    | ♦ Missouri         |
| ♦ Connecticut   | ♦ Nebraska         |
| ♦ Delaware      | ♦ New Hampshire    |
| ♦ Florida       | ♦ New York         |
| ♦ Hawaii        | ♦ North Carolina   |
| ♦ Idaho         | ♦ Oklahoma         |
| ♦ Illinois      | ♦ Ohio             |
| ♦ Indiana       | ♦ Pennsylvania     |
| ♦ Kansas        | ♦ Rhode Island     |
| ♦ Kentucky      | ♦ Tennessee        |
| ♦ Louisiana     | ♦ Texas            |
| ♦ Maine         | ♦ Vermont          |
| ♦ Massachusetts | ♦ Washington, D.C. |
| ♦ Michigan      |                    |